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A SYNOPSIS OF PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY.¹

BY CHARLES P. KEITH.

When I was honored with the invitation to address this assemblage, the question, almost forbidding, was, what should be my topic. Not having the ability of Mark Twain, I could not do as he did, when, as he declares, he began a series of magazine articles upon agriculture, because he knew nothing about it, and therefore would not be embarrassed by facts. I could not rise to flights of oratory which would make you forget the subject-matter—I must confine myself to the scope of my knowledge. I came to the conclusion that it would not be a waste of time for the active members of this society at this stage of their education to listen to a synopsis of the history of Pennsylvania. This I present to you, as elementary and short as the occasion requires, hoping to point out some features which you might overlook in your reading.

I will not begin with the red man, although the Lenni Lenape are really the “old families” of Philadelphia; nor will I narrate the early attempts to settle on the Delaware by those hardy navigators who gave the names to Capes May and Henlopen, and who, if successful, would have made the region now known as the Middle States a Boer republic. Henry Hudson, the discoverer, was in the service of the Dutch East India Company, and the builders of the fort at Beversrede on the Schuylkill, the first white men apparently who resided within the limits of Pennsylvania, the first purchasers probably of any of its soil from the Indians, were

¹ An address delivered June 8, 1900, before the Philomathean Society of the University of Pennsylvania.

agents of the Dutch West India Company, chartered in 1621 to colonize and trade with Southern Africa and America.

But the figure which looms up as the founder of European civilization west of the Delaware is Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. Fresh from the history of the Thirty Years War, you recognize that the figure is majestic and heroic, although in this drama it plays a short part. At the suggestion of Usselinx, who had organized the Dutch West India Company, this King of the Swedes, Goths, and Wends and Prince of Finnland chartered in 1626 the South Company with the exclusive right to trade with Africa and America below the latitude of Gibraltar, and in 1632 approved of extending the territorial limits of its operation, and of opening its membership to his German allies; but with this new charter awaiting his signature, he was killed in battle. He was succeeded on the throne by a character even more interesting, his daughter Christina, who has been called "the Semiramis of the North." She being then a little child, the government was carried on mainly by the great Chancellor Oxenstierna, who in 1638 planted a Swedish colony on Christiana Creek. The country was called New Sweden, and before long all the land from Cape Henlopen to Morrisville, Bucks County, was bought from the Indians. Peter Minuet, the captain of the first expedition, was a native of Cleves, and at one time director of New Netherlands; the chaplain who accompanied him on the next expedition was a native of West Gothland, and had been a professor in Gothenburg. In the course of a few years came many colonists from Sweden, spreading along the Delaware and Schuylkill, even crossing the bay to New Jersey. After the conquest by England, intercourse was still maintained with their old home, learned men from Sweden coming to visit this part of the New World, and down to the American Revolution the clergymen of the Swedish churches here being appointed by the Swedish Crown. Yet as the English increased in numbers, the Swedish part of the population was speedily absorbed without apparently affecting the rest; those bearing the patrony-

mics of these old settlers declined in importance, their language ceased to be spoken, and while there are many persons descended from them in the female line, there is little to remind us of their time but a few churches, now united, moreover, to the ecclesiastical body which here represents the Church of England, *i. e.*, the Protestant Episcopal Church. Among the settlers during Queen Christina's reign was Olof Persson Stillé, ancestor of the late Charles J. Stillé, LL. D., who was Provost of this University from 1868 to 1880, who moved the institution to its present home, and started its new life. It was my privilege to pass my college days under his provostship, and during his professorship. In later years he was the hardworking President of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. I hardly think I can be contradicted in calling him the most eminent of our citizens of Swedish blood and name.

The Swedes were conquered in 1655 by the Dutch, and the latter have left fewer traces than the Swedes. The storming of the fort at New Amstel, now New Castle, Delaware, by the English in 1664 gave the Swansons and other inhabitants of the site of Philadelphia a change of masters; but the Dutch retook New York and its dependency in 1673, and held both a few months, when the treaty of Westminster restored them to the English.

During the one hundred years and more of English rule the people of this region were accustomed to an intermediary between their resident chief officer, or even their captain general at New York, and the King. Charles II.'s brother, the Duke of York, he who afterwards came to the throne as James II., appointed the actual governors, and was treated as owner of the soil prior to the vesting of such powers and rights in William Penn. I sometimes feel that the principle of proprietary government thus established is looked upon as natural by the majority of the voters of Pennsylvania even at the present day, however inconsistent it was with monarchy, however inconsistent it is with "government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

When the Dutch first surrendered the New Netherlands, the father of William Penn had already risen so high in the service of Charles II. and the Duke of York as probably to look forward to a peerage for himself or his son. At the time William Penn sat for the portrait which represents him in armor, he was a young man of more position in the gay world than anybody else who ever joined the Society of Friends. His embracing Quakerism did not entirely deprive him of royal friendship, nor eradicate from his own heart a certain feeling for the Stuarts, which probably lasted through his life. At the death of his father a claim for money from the Crown survived, and in satisfaction of this a princely domain of over forty thousand square miles bearing his name was granted to William Penn by Charles II., and the lower counties, now called the State of Delaware, were released by the Duke of York. Of all this Penn and his heirs, with the title of Proprietary, were to be feudal lords; even when they parted with a piece of land in fee simple, their feudal interest in it was not extinguished, as would have been the case in England, but they became an intermediate lord between the purchaser and the King. Rent called quit-rent was reserved out of all the lands sold. It was by the advice of Henry Compton, Bishop of London, that Penn bought the country from the Indians. Thus he did like the Dutch and Swedes.

Penn and his heirs bore the title of Governor until the American Revolution; and although we popularly speak of Governor Gordon, Governor Thomas, Governor Hamilton, and others, they were merely lieutenant-governors administering the office as deputies of the Penns. It was owing to this and the disinclination of the Assembly to vote good salaries that the position was never held by a person of quality, except one penniless baronet, but generally by a well-to-do provincial or an inferior military officer, while we find noblemen and generals as the royal governors of other colonies. The binding of our lieutenant-governors by instructions, the expectation that they would be controlled by cer-

tain persons in whom the proprietary family had more confidence, made the office still less attractive. Ability and character were not secured, to command the respect which in that day would have been paid to rank. May I not say that from then until now, except at intervals, "bossism" has closed the way of political preferment to such men of ability as have taken for their own the motto of our Commonwealth, "Virtue, Liberty, and Independence"? Statesmen came to the front during the Revolutionary period. Two Pennsylvanians, Mifflin and St. Clair, held the presidency of the Continental Congress. It would be easy to turn my remarks into a panegyric upon Robert Morris and others, and then, after a notice of some persons and events in the next generation, give a scandalous chronicle of later politics. But I must confine myself to the less familiar and less inspiring theme of earlier times. In speaking of Pennsylvania prior to the incorporation among its citizens of the Connecticut claimants who had settled on the north branch of the Susquehanna, but had never recognized the Penns, and prior to the growth of Pittsburgh, and the prosperity of the Scotch-Irish, and prior to the long political ascendancy of the German element called the "Pennsylvania Dutch," we may disregard all but the southeastern section of the State, and treat only of the English and Welsh part of the population.

Penn sent over for various positions in the government a number of his kinsmen and connections, and these were, so to speak, the patricians of the earlier emigration. But no enormous grants of land nor laws of primogeniture made or preserved distinctions. Excepting for the position and rights of the proprietary family, at one time looked upon as a bulwark of liberty, Pennsylvania was a democracy where English Quakers of the industrial classes were making the "Holy Experiment" of a state founded upon equality as well as peace. They fined an almanac-maker for styling William Penn "Lord Penn;" they appealed to Quakers in England to coerce their great co-religionist; they allowed a Court of Chancery only a few years; they contended for the right to

tax the lands of the Proprietaries, and finally asked the Crown to abolish the Proprietaries' share in the government; and when the American Revolution made the people supreme, they forced the family to sell to the State all unsold land not embraced in the manors, and to forego all quit-rents except from manor lands.

The Quakers maintaining their influence in the Assembly of the Province until in 1756 a number of them were induced to retire from that body, money for war was for a long period obtained from the provincial treasury only by such casuistry as that they were bound in conscience to give "to the King's use," or by such subterfuge as that an appropriation for "grain" meant gunpowder. The Scotch-Irish on the frontiers were naturally belligerent, bore the brunt of the conflicts with the French and Indians, and with their kinsmen in other colonies were mainly the backbone of America in the struggle for independence. But it is remarkable that suddenly at the Revolution the Quaker region produced military leaders. I have in mind two who had had no previous experience, Anthony Wayne from his farm, and John Cadwalader from his store. The fame of the former is transcendent. The Commander-in-Chief leaned much on the advice of the latter. As a little thing has sometimes changed the course of history, it is possible that Cadwalader's duel with Conway was a more important event than has appeared to historians, for the wounded Conway apologized to Washington, and the Cabal to deprive us of him who was "First in War, First in Peace, and First in the Hearts of his Countrymen" dissolved. Pennsylvania has continued to produce her heroes of the battle-field, some fresh from peaceful avocations, some trained in tactics, some educated at West Point. Many of us think that there should have been a higher appreciation of Meade. At any rate, in the war to preserve the Union, the critical battle or series of battles in which the "high-water mark" of the Confederacy was reached, and the tide was driven back, was fought on Pennsylvania soil, and the result accomplished largely by

Pennsylvania troops, commanded by Pennsylvania generals, Meade and Gregg, Reynolds and Hancock, the Wellington of the Waterloo being the Philadelphian, Meade.

I must caution you against describing those who made Pennsylvania as Boeotian and unlettered. Early Quakers took their pride in controversy, and their pleasure in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. The schoolmasters and the practitioners of physic were numerous. Wealthy non-Quakers sent sons to London to the Inns of Court. The pre-eminent scholar among those not born here was James Logan, a matriculate of no university, reared to no learned profession, whose earlier literary advantages lay in his being the son of a Scotch dominie turned Quaker, in whose school he assisted for a short time. From mercantile life in Bristol he was taken by Penn as secretary, and came over in 1699, and for years was the business agent of the Proprietary, with all which it involved—real estate agent, merchant, negotiator with the Indians, and politician. But you can see under the care of the Library Company of Philadelphia the many books in various languages which he imported and read. He was deemed fit to be chief justice of the Province. He investigated natural phenomena; he published a translation of Cicero's *De Senectute*, and one in verse of Dionysius Cato's *Disticha de Moribus*. Some of his communications to the learned world were printed at Leyden and Amsterdam. We sons of the University of Pennsylvania, perhaps most fittingly describing ourselves, in view of the history of our Alma Mater, as grandsons of the College of Philadelphia and great-grandsons of the Academy of Philadelphia, are fully appreciative of our debt to a greater natural philosopher than Logan, to him who a few months after Logan's death snatched the lightning from the clouds, and a quarter of a century later, by his negotiations with France, snatched the sceptre from tyrants,—Benjamin Franklin, the best remembered Pennsylvanian (for he lived here from his youth) of our Revolutionary period, the second most important American in that struggle,—but we should be proud of

the fact that James Logan, more of an universal scholar, headed the list of the trustees of the Academy in 1749. The Republic of Letters was extended to our forests and mountains by German sectarians, whose learning, to be sure, was mainly theological, and whose philosophy ran to mysticism. Pietists, Moravians, Lutherans, who had had the best education afforded in that day, graduated from German universities, and trained for a career in law, diplomacy, the lecture-room, or the pulpit, established communities, printed books, and preached to the Indians; while the more utilitarian English-speaking inhabitants found, perhaps for all time, their highest intellectual practice in law and medicine. The Philadelphia lawyer, as the unraveller of the intricate, has been proverbial throughout the United States: to be taught by the Philadelphia doctor, students have come from the entire hemisphere.

Philadelphia, within a few decades from its founding, outstripped all the other cities in the colonies in population and trade. Its philanthropy kept pace with its prosperity. It opened its doors to all religions. Although the Quaker City, it has been called the home of Presbyterianism in America, and the Church of England flourished here without tithes, transmitting to her daughter Church a position in some respects leading. Non-jurors and Whitefield and Zinzendorf came here on missions. Jews, at least those with the blood of Israel, mingled in the most exclusive society.

When the natural advantages of other places diverted its commerce, and made it secondary in those matters following in the train of wealth, historic association became the essential importance of Philadelphia. It will always attract as the Mecca of American liberty, with Independence Hall as its Kaaba. This national interest in our past, I would have you bear in mind in all consideration of the wants of our city. Cherish the fame and the foot-prints of those who have preceded us. I do not mean build monuments: it mementoes be needed, the endowment of a fellowship or

professorship will serve the double purpose of honoring the dead and benefitting the living. Let your influence be strong for the preservation of such landmarks as teach or illustrate history, whether they be such as Old Swedes' Church, or Logan's dwelling-house (called "Stenton"), or even the name of Swanson Street. Nor do I wish to spur you to over-restoration, whereby posterity will not know what is old, and what only pretends to be old. With these suggestions I close my address to you Philomatheans, for I suppose that, like the members of our society in my college days, the majority of you are natives and prospective residents of this city. In late years it has become a home for all races, colors, and tongues, making it well to remember its name and the Scriptural injunction which its founder had at heart: Ἡ Φιλαδέλφεια μένετω. Abounding with Quaker comfort and with Christian love of God, may the wish expressed in the paronomastic motto of the corporation have its fruition: *Philadelphia maneto!*